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AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

ACCOUNTABILITY: INCONSISTENT, SITUATION  
DEPENDENT AND SUBJECTIVE

by

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

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## *Preface*

“Accountability.” A campaign aimed at increasing emphasis on this core value of Air Force service was immediately launched by Air Force Chief of Staff, General Ronald Fogleman upon assumption of his current position. As a result of this campaign and several subsequent high profile incidents, accountability is now being closely scrutinized in both the public and private sectors. With this scrutiny has come the realization that public accountability is a double edged sword. Coupled with General Fogleman’s promise that Air Force leaders would be held accountable for incidents for which they bore responsibility has come a demand from Congress, the media, and the surviving relatives of accident victims to identify and punish the “accountable” individual(s). In almost every case, these individuals have a very limited understanding of what occurred, there knowledge limited to the information (often sensationalized) available in the media. Moreover there motives may vary from political to economic (selling newspapers) to settling a score.

This increased focus on accountability prompted the writing of this paper. Several months of research have convinced this writer that the new emphasis on accountability, when combined with proper dissemination of information, will make the Air Force a better organization.

Like any difficult and arduous task, this paper is the result of many who helped and guided me along the way over the last several months. A special thanks to my advisor,

Colonel Larry Lomax for his very thorough and meticulous review of the many drafts of this paper. I would also like to thank Dr. Pearson-Marrow for assisting with the student survey. Major Chris Geisel, SAF/PA, who provided most of the referenced reports as well as guidance in gathering other data. Lt. Colonel Victor L. Warzinski, Third Air Force, Public Affairs Office who provided some key information on the F-15C crash. Most important, I would like to thank my family for their patience and support during the writing of this important and timely paper.

### *Abstract*

Recent events such as the Black Hawk shoot down in Bosnia and Khobar Tower bombing in Saudi Arabia, along with strong public opinion have focused national attention on the issue of accountability. Despite this increased attention, it is the opinion of this author that senior Air Force leadership has not adequately defined, explained or standardized the concept of accountability. As a result, there exists a perception that accountability, in its application, is inconsistent, situation dependent, and subjective. This perception gives the appearance of a double standard and a “one mistake” Air Force.

Divided into seven chapters, the paper’s primary focus centers on two questions: first, what is the Air Force definition of accountability and second, why the increased emphasis on it? After answering these two questions, student accountability survey results are examined. Analysis will provide some insight into how the new emphasis on accountability is perceived by a select group of Air Force Officers at Air War College (AWC), Air Command and Staff College (ACSC), and Squadron Officer School (SOS). Moving to the heart of the paper, three high profile incidents, which address the application of accountability, are analyzed: an F-15C crash, which resulted in charging two NCOs with negligent homicide; the Khobar Tower bombing, a case in which the accountability issue is still pending; and the CT-43 mishap, a case in which several people in the chain of command were held accountable. The paper will end with a conclusion and several recommendations.



## Chapter 1

### Introduction

*We depend on our commanders and supervisors to insure that their people meet the high standards of our profession. When they fail, when they don't measure up, then we must hold them accountable.*

—General Ronald Fogleman  
Chief of Staff, USAF

“Accountability,” has become the Air Force buzz word of the 90s. Today’s Air Force leaders are told that when they “fail,” when they do not “measure up,” they will be held accountable.<sup>1</sup> This approach to accountability is not novel; rather, it is a rich and integral part of our military tradition. From the time of General George Washington and the Continental Army, accountability has been one of the touchstones of U.S. military leadership and command. However, increased emphasis, fueled by events such as the Black Hawk shoot down, and Khobar Tower bombing, is new and has led some to contend that the accountability pendulum has swung too far.

These high profile incidents have focused the attention of the public and senior Air Force leadership on the issue of who should be held accountable and under what circumstances. This renewed emphasis on accountability, without a standardized Air Force definition of accountability, has, in some instances, blurred the lines between the concepts of individual liability, accountability, and responsibility. This blurring of the lines has led some to believe that they will be unfairly punished for the improper actions of

others. Consequently, many of the surveyed officers misunderstand the renewed emphasis on accountability and view it as “a senior officer (O-6 and above) witch hunt!”<sup>2</sup> The truth is the term accountability is not clearly defined, nor has Air Force senior leadership adequately explained the concept.

These findings and observations lead to the thesis of this paper:

Failure by senior Air Force leadership to adequately define, explain, or standardize the concept of accountability has created the perception that the application of accountability is inconsistent, situation dependent, and subjective. This perception creates the negative appearance of a double standard and a “one mistake” Air Force.

This paper examines some problems that have resulted from why General Ronald Fogleman, increased the emphasis on accountability without clearly defining what he means by accountability and when it applies. Next, it focuses on the results of a student survey on commander accountability conducted at AWC, ACSC, and SOS. After assessing what might be called “the accountability environment,” three high profile incidents are examined to test the thesis. The paper concludes with several recommendations.

We will begin with a question. What does General Fogleman and other Air Force senior leaders mean when they talk about accountability? This should be an easy question to answer, but it is not.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> AWC student comment, accountability survey conducted at AWC, ACSC, and SOS.

## Chapter 2

### What Is Accountability?

*... it is our responsibility and our duty to hold people...accountable for their actions and respond appropriately.*

—General Ronald R. Fogleman  
Air Force Chief of Staff

The Random House College Dictionary, describes accountability as being “subject to the obligation to report, explain, or justify. Furthermore, it requires one to be “responsible; answerable.” And list’s accountability as a synonym for responsibility. The United States Air Force Core Values booklet, dated 1 January 1997, defines accountability through a series of statements. This booklet, directed at “all members of the Air Force family,” states that, “no person of integrity tries to shift the blame to others or takes credit for the work of others; ‘the buck stops here’ says it best.”<sup>1</sup> This statement, no matter how insightful, falls short of providing a clear and standardized definition of accountability. As a result, the concept of accountability becomes subject to broad interpretation by commanders, thus creating an environment where accountability enforcement is inconsistent, situation dependent, and subjective.

In a further attempt to answer the question, “what is accountability,” three senior officers at Air University were interviewed separately. Each senior leader was asked to define accountability and each provided a different answer.

The AU Commander, defined accountability as, “holding people responsible for their actions appropriate to their authority and within the realm of their responsibility.”<sup>2</sup> According to the AWC Commandant, “accountability should go up and down the chain of command. It is taking care of troops, doing the right thing, core values of the Air Force, and doing what is good for the organization.”<sup>3</sup> The SOS Commandant, defined accountability as “...consequences for your actions...i.e., reward and punishment. For example, reward for the good things and corrective action, rehabilitation and or punishment, if required, for the bad things.”<sup>4</sup>

Given that the Air Force Core Values Booklet definition of accountability is subject to interpretation, commanders are left to develop their own definition if they are to be consistent in their actions. In developing that definition, they must clearly distinguish between accountability and liability.

Liability is a concept based upon an individual’s action or inaction. It subjects one to penalty for failure to conform or meet standards and usually carries individual consequences.<sup>5</sup> Whereas accountability, in a military environment, requires individuals to be answerable or accountable for the people and resources entrusted to them.

For example, if Lt. Knot rapes and murders Chief Able; the Lt. alone is liable for his actions and should be held accountable. The commander is not liable and should not be held accountable. But suppose Commander Friendly knew of the relationship and condoned it. When the relationship soured and Chief Able complained that Lt. Knot was stalking her, Commander Friendly squelched her written report of complaint. Under the second set of circumstances, although Lt. Knot is clearly liable, Commander Friendly

should also be held accountable for his failure to act according to his command responsibilities.

In the end, when Commander Friendly is relieved of command and Lt. Knot is sent off to jail, it is likely that the public's perception of what happen will be shaped by a story sensationalized in the media, while the Air Force will remain essentially silent (for legal and other reasons). A lack of dissemination of key facts by Air Force senior leadership creates an environment where it appears that the application of accountability is inconsistent, situation dependent, and subjective. This perception undermines the intent of why the Air Force Chief of Staff increased emphasis on accountability.

### **Why the increased emphasis on accountability?**

The purpose of increased emphasis on accountability, according to General Fogleman, is to "ensure good order and discipline." But more important, it is to ensure "Air Force standards are uniformly known, consistently applied and non-selectively enforced."<sup>6</sup> This increased emphasis on accountability can likely be traced to April 14, 1994, when two Air Force F-15s, under the command and control of an AWACS aircraft, staffed by a U.S. Air Force crew, engaged and destroyed two U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopters. Twenty-six soldiers, airmen, and civilians were killed and no action was taken against the pilots involved.<sup>7</sup>

Apparently not satisfied with the "disconnects between the administrative actions and performance ratings"<sup>8</sup> of individuals involved in the Black Hawk incident, Air Force Chief of Staff, General Fogleman initiated the renewed emphasis on accountability.

In a videotaped statement that was made mandatory viewing for all officers, General Fogleman outlined the importance of accountability in these terms:

Accountability is critically important to good order and discipline of the force. And, failure to ensure accountability will destroy the trust of the American public—the very people living under the Constitution we swore to support and defend, and who look to us, the members of their nation’s Air Force, to embrace and live by the standards that are higher than those in the society we serve.<sup>9</sup>

Most commanders would take pleasure in knowing that the Air Force Chief of Staff is pursuing uniform Air Force standards, that are consistently applied and non-selectively enforced. Yet, according to a student survey on command accountability, many officers misunderstand the increased emphasis on accountability because the perception is that accountability is an inconsistent, situation dependent, and subjective concept.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Department of the Air Force, United States Air Force Core Values Booklet, 1 January 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Lieutenant General Joseph J. Redden, USAF, Commander, Air University, interviewed by author, Maxwell AFB, Ala., 14 February 1997.

<sup>3</sup> Major General D. Bruce Smith, USAF, Commandant, Air War College, interviewed by author, Maxwell AFB, Ala., 12 February 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Colonel William Scott, USAF, Commandant, Squadron Officer School, interviewed by author, Maxwell AFB, Ala., 12 February 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Campbell Black, M.A., “Black’s Law Dictionary,” Revised Fourth Edition.

<sup>6</sup> General Ronald R. Fogleman, USAF, Air Force Standards and Accountability, 10 August 1995. 1 - 8.

<sup>7</sup> “Critics say military looks other way on disciplining its own,” San Antonio Express-News, 25 December 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Air Force Standards and Accountability, 10 August 1995. 1 - 8.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Commander Accountability Survey**

#### **Purpose**

The survey analyzes and assesses the current accountability environment as viewed by active duty Air Force officers, ranging in rank from captain to colonel. The representative pool was taken from those officers attending an in-resident professional military education (PME) program.

#### **Survey Size**

Four hundred and forty-one surveys were distributed to active duty Air Force AWC, ACSC, and SOS students. One hundred and seventy surveys were distributed to AWC students, one hundred and thirty were distributed to ACSC students, and one hundred and forty surveys were distributed to SOS students. A total of three hundred and twenty-eight surveys were returned. One hundred and four individuals completed surveys from AWC, one hundred and six individuals, from ACSC, and one hundred and eighteen individuals, from SOS.

## **Methodology**

Using a sliding scale ( strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree) each officer surveyed responded to the statements in figures 1-6. In addition, each officer surveyed was encouraged to make candid comments on the survey sheet.

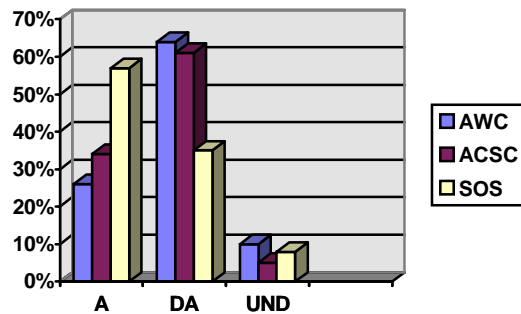
## **Results**

Whereas the student survey data on accountability identified no specific trends, it did provide a wide range of opinions on commander accountability. The data in figures 1-6 has been simplified and each graph will only show agree (A), disagree (DA), and undecided (UND). The agree column represents both strongly agree and agree and the disagree column represents both strongly disagree and disagree. A survey table, showing the entire range of responses and percentages for each statement has been included in the appendix.

Each graph is preceded by one of the survey statements and is followed by a candid survey comment so the reader may get a feel as to the attitude of the individual(s) being surveyed.



**STATEMENT 1: Commanders should be held accountable, in all situations, for the actions of subordinates**



**Figure 1**

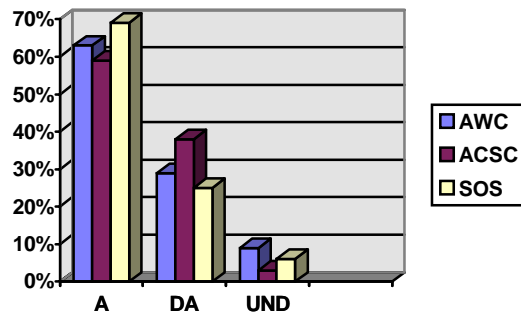
*Accountability should be placed at the level where the individual had the responsibility and authority to execute the mission.*

—AWC Student  
Survey Comment

Taking command of a squadron is the highlight of an officer's career. Forever vivid in each officer's memory are the words, "I accept the command." However, with these words come increased responsibility for your actions and the actions of subordinates. Fifty-seven percent of the SOS students surveyed agreed with statement 1. However, sixty-four percent of AWC and sixty-two percent of the ACSC students surveyed disagreed with statement 1.

Seasoned senior officers better comprehend the realistic and operational dynamics of command. They understand that despite their best effort, they cannot monitor everything and everyone. On the other hand, junior officers who have yet to experience the weight of command, appear to have an idealized view of a commander's ability to influence his or her subordinates' actions.

**STATEMENT 2: Commanders should be held accountable only for the actions of subordinates over which they have direct control**



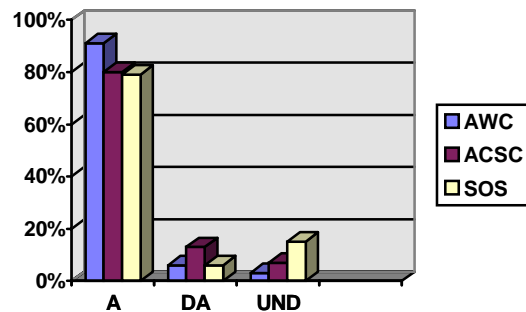
**Figure 2**

*Total accountability is a neat PR sound bite—but is unrealistic in practice. It is a shame to be relieved due to actions of one individual, after an honorable and good career. The question is, are our commanders “disposable” in exchange for guarding the public trust or is there a median position?*

—AWC Student  
Survey Comment

Survey results, indicate a majority of officers surveyed agree that commanders should only be held accountable for the actions of subordinates over whom they have direct control. The agree percentage for AWC and ACSC was fairly close, sixty-two and sixty percent respectively. In a totally opposite view from statement 1, sixty-nine percent of the SOS students agree with statement 2.

**STATEMENT 3: The Air Force has increased emphasis on commander accountability**



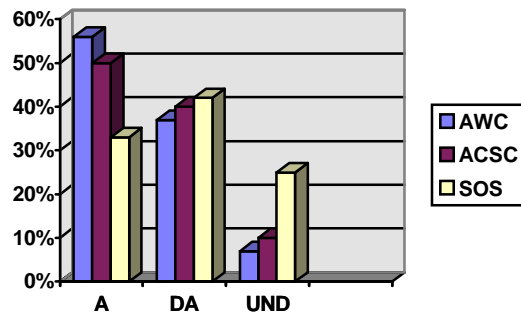
**Figure 3**

*I believe the AF is currently over-emphasizing accountability and I fear commanders are feeling pressure to either micro-manage or to deal with mistakes strongly to placate leadership. Mistakes are not the same as violating the law or code of conduct.*

—AWC Student  
Survey Comment

The response to the survey statement, “has the Air Force increased emphasis on accountability” indicates that General Fogleman’s accountability message is coming through loud and clear. More than ninety percent of all the officers surveyed agreed that Air Force senior leadership has increased emphasis on accountability. However, several of the officers surveyed indicated the need for a good Air Force definition of accountability. One Air War College student surveyed even suggested that, “it would be nice if the AF passed us a handbook on the new accountability rules just like when General McPeak gave all SNCOs and officers copies of AFM 1-1...set up some type of training so we can reinforce, as well as understand, the appropriate behavior.”<sup>1</sup> Another AWC student surveyed was of the strong opinion that “accountability and punishment should not be used together.”

**STATEMENT 4: Current Air Force accountability emphasis will force commanders, at all levels, to become micro-managers**



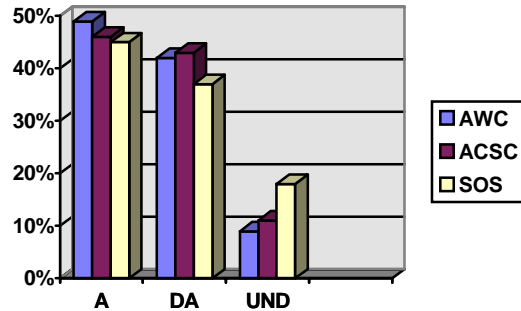
**Figure 4**

*Only weak commanders will resort to micro-management to “protect” themselves against accountability. Unfortunately, the AF has many weak commanders.*

—AWC Student  
Survey Comment

According to fifty-six percent of AWC and fifty percent of ACSC students surveyed, current Air Force accountability emphasis will cause commanders to become micro-managers. Survey data indicates thirty-two percent of SOS students agree with statement 4 with a significant number, twenty-six percent, undecided,.

**STATEMENT 5: Senior Air Force leadership should provide a full public explanation, other than “I lost confidence in his/her ability to command,” when commanders are relieved**



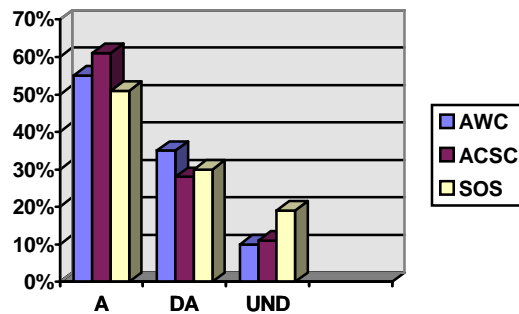
**Figure 5**

*There are too many secrets, when commanders are relieved, that are protected under the legal umbrella—the term “check six” [has] new meaning in today’s AF.*

—AWC Student  
Survey Comment

Most officers could accept statement 5 either way, on average, fifty percent of the officers surveyed agreed with statement 5, roughly forty percent disagreed and about ten percent were undecided. In essence, the majority of officers surveyed are not satisfied with the Air Force senior leadership response of “trust me” to the question of why a commander was relieved of duty. However, according to the United States Air Force Core Values Booklet, not trusting or “having faith” in the system is inconsistent with “service before self.” Lack of “faith in the system is to adopt the view that you know better than those above you in the chain of command.”<sup>2</sup>

**STATEMENT 6: We serve in a “one mistake” Air Force.**



**Figure 6**

*This is not a one-mistake Air Force. We fully realize that our people are going to make honest mistakes as they attempt to perform their duties. That's an understandable part of the process of gaining experience.*

—General Ronald Fogleman  
Chief of Staff, USAF

In his speech on standards and accountability, the Air Force Chief of Staff attempted to distinguish between what is considered a crime and what is considered a mistake. The majority of officers surveyed consistently agree that we serve in a one mistake Air Force. The truth is some “mistakes,” no matter how innocent, have consequences. In addition, if an individual continues to make mistakes, even small mistakes, can and will adversely affect a career.

A related question is can we accurately differentiate between a mistake and a crime and was the commander justified in charging two NCOs with negligent homicide after they performed maintenance on an F-15C that subsequently crashed, killing the pilot?

**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Survey conducted prior to the release of the United States Air Force Core Values Booklet.

<sup>2</sup> United States Air Force Core Value Booklet, 1 January 1997.

## **Chapter 4**

### **F-15C Crash**

#### **What Happened?**

Technical Sergeants William T. Campbell and Thomas P. Mueller, improperly installed and inspected an F-15C fighter's longitudinal and lateral flight control rods causing it to crash on take off, killing the pilot on May 30, 1995.<sup>1</sup> The "cross-connected controls caused the plane to roll to the left instead of going up when the stick was pulled back. When the stick was pulled right, instead of rolling right, the plane increased its roll to the left and the nose pitched down."<sup>2</sup>

#### **Who was held accountable?**

Technical Sergeants William T. Campbell and Thomas P. Mueller, both of the 52nd Equipment Maintenance Squadron (EMS), were charged with negligent homicide in the death of the F-15C pilot and four counts each of dereliction of duty. According to the Air Force News Service, the two NCOs "failed to inspect their work, and failed to complete the aircraft maintenance paperwork properly." Also, according to the same source, administrative actions against other 562nd EMS service members may be levied.<sup>3</sup>

## **Was the decision correct?**

“No,” according to the *Air Force Times* article, entitled, “The High Cost Of Accountability.” In this article it was reported “no evidence existed that Mueller and Campbell willfully disregarded regulations or directives in a manner that would make them criminally liable for the crash of the F-15.”<sup>4</sup> However, based on the *Air Force News Service*, the decision to hold Mueller and Campbell accountable for their actions was correct.

Mueller and Campbell were charged with negligent homicide for “failure to inspect their work and to complete the aircraft maintenance paperwork properly.” This failure was not a mistake, but rather a dereliction of duty which is a crime punishable under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, Article 92.<sup>5</sup>

According to the Third Air Force Public Affairs Office:

Both individuals were taught in their initial flight control training that the rods could be crossed at the mixer assembly and an operational check was required and extremely important. TSgt Campbell also learned of the possibility of crossed rods during maintenance for the mixer assembly when all F-15C mechanics were briefed on a similar previous incident in 1991 and the need for extreme care and adherence to the technical orders. In 1991 TSgt Mueller received the message concerning the 1991 incident and was responsible for disseminating the information to the wing; his supervisor ordered TSgt Mueller to insure all members of the wing were aware of the problem; and he was ordered to make sure he developed an In-Progress Inspection as well as an operational inspection. Additionally, the technical order contained a conspicuous warning that failure to correctly install would lead to aircraft destruction and loss of life. An operational check-out by both TSgt Mueller and Campbell was also required. Both were specially trained to accomplish this task. An In-Progress-Inspection was due prior to closing up the aircraft and before they did the operational check.<sup>6</sup>

In further support of the Third Air Force Public Affairs statement, a former F-15 aircraft maintenance squadron commander interviewed stated that the maintenance



procedure accomplished by Mueller and Campbell was critical. This meant that Mueller and Campbell were required to have someone else verify the correctness of the maintenance performed.

In fairness to Mueller and Campbell, the pilot and crew chief also had a duty to check the proper movement of the aircraft's flight control rods before take off. According to a F-15 pilot, the pilot and crew chief must verify that all "stick" movement is correct prior to take off. For example, the "crew chief and pilot must both visually inspect the aircraft as the pilot maneuvers the stick, verifying the correct response."

An earlier High-Accident-Potential (HAP) report indicated that F-15 rods could easily be "connected to the wrong receptacle at the mixer end" and, as crash investigators were to discover in tests, "the mistake is surprisingly easy to make: Only the rod's ends are visible to mechanics as they connect them through two open panels on the jet, and they connected just as easily when correctly installed as when they are crossed."<sup>7</sup> However, the F-15 maintainer's technical order contained a conspicuous warning that "failure to correctly install [flight control rods] would lead to aircraft destruction and loss of life."<sup>8</sup>

The same *Air Force Times* article, alleges there was a secret Air Force investigation, in which the F-15 program office determined that "a cross-connection [of flight-control rods] would be caught" by the mechanics or the pilot before a plane could take off"<sup>9</sup> Moreover, according to the article, one unidentified Air Force official, in a handwritten memo stated, "[w]e ought to fix it so they can't be connected wrong."<sup>10</sup>

Situations such as the one described above foster the perception of a double standard because commanders may interpret accountability differently and Air Force senior leadership does not disseminate its side of the story to the public or the Air Force community.

Placing the blame solely on the mechanic's duty to inspect, Major General Charles Heflebower, who commanded all U.S. Air Force Bases in Germany, charged each mechanic with one count of negligent homicide and four counts of dereliction of duty. On the day Mueller's court martial on these charges was to begin, he shot himself. Campbell subsequently accepted a general discharge in exchange for dismissal of the charges against him.<sup>11</sup> As a result, we will never know what decision a court martial board would have reached.

However, "Heflebower's decision to charge the two mechanics with negligent homicide was viewed by many as especially harsh," indicating the "accountability pendulum has swung too far."<sup>12</sup> Mainstream media never reported that the mechanics were aware of the potential for crossing the rods nor that they failed to properly complete the maintenance checklist. What was reported and read by military members was that the "F-15 program office had known for 10 years that flight control rods on F-15s could be cross-connected. Despite this knowledge, "officials failed to warn mechanics in technical manuals or training courses."<sup>13</sup>

We must accept that when incidents occur, the Air Force becomes the focus of media attention. When this happens, mainstream media becomes the primary source of information for military members. This information provides the basis of the opinions formed by many military members. When the information is incorrect and remains unchallenged by the Air Force, it undermines faith in the system. It becomes more difficult to support the actions of the commander and chips away at the concept of "service above self" which is a core value.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Air Force News Service, Administrative Discharge Approved in Lieu of Spangdahlem Courts-Martial, 14 November 1996 (Questions and Answers). 1 - 10.

<sup>2</sup> Air Force News Service, NCOs charged in fighters pilot's death, 2 December 1996, Microsoft Internet Explorer.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Steven Watkins, "The High Cost of Accountability," Air Force Times, 23 December 1996.

<sup>5</sup> Manual for Courts-Martial (MCM), United States (1995 Edition)

<sup>6</sup> Air Force News Service, Administrative Discharge Approval in Lieu of Spangdahlem Court-martial.

<sup>7</sup> Steven Watkins, "The High Cost of Accountability," Air Force Times, 23 December 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Third Air Force Public Affairs Office, Questions and Answers, 14 November 1996.

<sup>9</sup> Steven Watkins, "The High Cost of Accountability," Air Force Times, 23 December 1996.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Khobar Towers Bombing**

The determination of accountability is unquestionably subjective. Yet, General Fogleman has said “when people fail, when they make mistakes, they must be held accountable.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, when the Downing report findings indicate Brigadier General Schwalier was, in part, responsible for the Khobar Towers bomb attack, and the Air Force examines the same events and say he was not, confusion results.

#### **What happened?**

“Shortly before 10:00 p.m. local time on Tuesday, June 25, 1996, a fuel truck was parked next to the northern perimeter fence at the Khobar Towers complex. Air Force guards posted on top of the closest building, Building 131, immediately spotted the truck and suspected a bomb as its drivers fled the scene in a nearby car. The guards began evacuating the building, but were unable to complete this task before a tremendous explosion occurred. The blast, completely destroyed the northern face of the building, blew out windows from surrounding buildings and was heard for miles. Nineteen American service members were killed and hundreds more seriously injured. Many Saudis and other nationals were also injured.”<sup>2</sup>

## **Who was held accountable?**

At the time this was written, no one was held accountable. The Downing report found that Brigadier General Schwalier, USAF, Commander, 4404<sup>th</sup> Wing was, in part, responsible for the security failures at Khobar Towers. The Air Force reexamined the incident and determined he was not. The Secretary of Defense (Cohen) directed further investigation of events and a final determination of accountability is still pending.

## **Was the decision correct?**

If the Downing report is to be accepted at face value, the decision by Air Force senior leadership to not hold Brigadier General Schwalier accountable for the deaths of nineteen American servicemen and the loss of resources was incorrect.

General Wayne A. Downing, General, USA (Ret.) was selected to head a Task Force following the bomb attack on Khobar Towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.<sup>3</sup> This 40-man Pentagon task force was highly critical of the military leaders, noting their failure to provide clear standards, adequate funding and proper attention to protect U.S. forces against a recognized terrorist threat in Saudi Arabia.<sup>4</sup> Also, Downing found that some of the same issues raised by his task force, for example, the inadequacy of human-source intelligence, were also cited by investigators following the 1983 Marine barracks bombing in Beirut that killed 241.<sup>5</sup>

In both cases, military members were found to be or cited as being responsible for the security failures which resulted in the deaths of American servicemen, yet no military member was held accountable. In the Beirut incident, President Reagan accepted

responsibility for the disaster<sup>6</sup> and in the Khobar Towers incident, Secretary of Defense Perry accepted responsibility for the disaster.<sup>7</sup>

The Downing Report indicated that Schwalier did not make terrorism a top priority; did not make his superiors aware of force protection matters beyond his capability to correct; and never raised the issue with his Saudi counterparts of expanding the perimeter or security outside of the fence<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore, according to Downing, security is pretty much left to the base commander. A vulnerability assessment of Khobar Towers distributed five months before the attack noted that windows throughout the complex were “untreated” and were “not protected from a blast.”<sup>9</sup> Despite this report, Schwalier apparently deferred a budget request for protective “mylar film” for windows to prevent the shattering of glass. Twelve of the 19 people killed at the Khobar Towers died from flying glass. In addition, Khobar Towers was identified to Schwalier as one of the three highest priority soft targets in the region<sup>10</sup>.

In the end, the Downing Report only singled Schwalier out, by name, as bearing some blame for the Khobar Towers bombing. For example, according to the report, Schwalier failed to heed warnings of a terrorist attack on the Khobar Towers in Dhahran. The Downing report went on to say, whereas Schwalier did a “reasonable” job in increasing security inside of the complex, he did not do enough to increase, security outside the gates,” or enough to convince the Saudis, who were responsible for security on the outside of the perimeter, to do more towards increasing security<sup>11</sup>. Commander responsibility demands a level of accountability which far exceeds that of civilian counterparts, it requires us to adhere to “standards that are higher than those in the society we serve.”<sup>12</sup>

The Air Force did not agree with the Downing report and appointed its own investigation team headed by Lt. General Record. It is the position of Air Force senior leadership that Downing's conclusions were based on the misapplication of Army standards to an Air Force officer.<sup>13</sup> Army commanders are responsible for security beyond the perimeter of their base. However, by contrast, Air Force commanders are only responsible for security up to the perimeter of their base.<sup>14</sup> To date, the Record Report has not been released. However, according to Pentagon officials, the initial Air Force report did not hold Schwalier accountable for the Khobar Towers bombing. The decision by Air Force senior leadership to not hold Schwalier accountable drew immediate criticism from the media and requests for review from Secretary Of Defense Cohen.

Headlines such as "Critics Say the Military Looks Other Way on Disciplining Its Own"<sup>15</sup> and "Source: No Air Force Punishment Expected in Khobar Towers Bombing"<sup>16</sup> demonstrate to the Air Force that its renewed emphasis on accountability is a double edged sword. The public expected someone to be held accountable for the nineteen service members who died as a result of the bomb attack on the Khobar Towers.

The New York Times appeared to be waging a personal and on-going campaign to place accountability for the Khobar Towers bombing squarely on Schwaliers' shoulders. Based on a recent New York Times article, "Air Force Reviewing Exoneration of General in Attack," the campaign may have had affect. According to this article, a senior DOD civilian ordered the Air Force to "review the evidence and decide if someone should be punished" for the Khobar Towers bombing on the basis of the Downing report<sup>17</sup>.

Assessing accountability for the Khobar Tower bombing provides a perfect example of the subjectivity involved in holding an individual accountable. Downing thought

Schwalier was accountable for the Khobar Towers bombing, but senior Air Force leadership did not. Although the case is still under investigation, the apparent reversal gives the appearance of inconsistency by holding two NCOs criminally accountable in the F-15C case while not holding the commanding general accountable for the loss of his personnel.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Air Force Standards and Accountability, 10 August 1995. 1 - 8.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Defense, Force Protection, Secretary of Defense Report to the President, 16 September 1996. 1 - 65.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Jamie McIntyre and Anthony Colling, "Source: No Air Force punishment expected in Khobar bombing." CNN Interactive, 11 December 1996, Microsoft Internet Explorer.

<sup>5</sup> Department of Defense, Force Protection, Secretary of Defense Report to the President, 16 September 1996, 1 - 65.

<sup>6</sup> Major Charles J. Dunlap, Jr., USAF, The Military Justice System and Command Accountability; A Critical Analysis of the Beirut Bombing Case (Norfolk, VA.: National Defense University, Armed Forces Staff College, 7 May 1984.

<sup>7</sup> Department of Defense, Force Protection, Secretary of Defense Report to the President, 16 September 1996, 1 - 65.

<sup>8</sup> "Task Force cites military's inattention to security in Saudi bombing," Associated Press, 16 September 1996, Microsoft Explorer.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Steve Macko, "Report says Pentagon failed to take adequate security measures, CNN Interactive.

<sup>12</sup> Air Force Standards and Accountability, 10 August 1995. 1 - 8.

<sup>13</sup> "Critics say military looks other way on disciplining its own," San Antonio Express-News, 25 December 1996.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> CNN Interactive, 11 December 1996, Microsoft Explorer.

<sup>17</sup> Eric Schmitt, "Air Force Reviewing Exoneration of General in Attack.



## **Chapter 6**

### **CT-43A Crash**

#### **What Happened?**

“On 27 Mar 96, a CT-43A, call sign IFO 21, assigned to the 86<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing (86 AW), Ramstein Air Base, Germany, was tasked by Headquarters, United States Air Missions (HQ USAF/CVAM), to support a U.S. Department of Commerce travel requirement. The mishap aircraft was assigned to transport the delegation from Zagreb, Croatia, to various locations in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia over a three-day period. On 3 Apr 96, on the fourth leg of a five-leg trip, the mishap aircraft impacted high terrain while attempting an instrument approach into the Dubrovnik Airport. The aircraft was destroyed and all personnel on board were fatally injured. After the initial crash response, including search and rescue by a number of local and IFOR agencies, the aircraft accident response was handled by HQ United States Air Forces in Europe (HQ USAFE)”<sup>1</sup>.

#### **Who was held accountable?**

Brig. Gen. William E. Stevens, Commander, 86<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing (86<sup>th</sup> AW) and Col. John E. Mazurowski, Operations Officer, 86<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing were given letters of reprimand under Article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Stevens was punished “for dereliction of duty for negligently failing to ensure” that government directives had been followed in reviews of airport safety under his command. Mazurowski was penalized for “dereliction of duty for willfully failing to ensure” that the same directives had been followed<sup>2</sup>.

Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Cliver, former director of operations for U.S. Air Forces in Europe, was faulted for “failing to exercise effective oversight” over his organization. No criminal charges were preferred against any officer involved.<sup>3</sup>

### **Was the decision correct?**

The decision to hold key 86<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing senior leadership accountable for the crash of CT-43 was correct based on the findings of the accident investigation board. In addition, accountability enforcement in this situation appears to be consistent with the Air Force Core Value Booklet definition of accountability, “the buck stops here,” because every individual in the chain of command who played a role in the CT-43 mishap was punished.

It was the opinion of Major General Charles H. Coolidge, Jr., USAF, accident investigation board president, that the CT-43 accident was mostly caused by the “failure of command” to comply with Air Force Instruction (AFI) 11-206 and “aircrew error”<sup>4</sup>

Failure of the 86<sup>th</sup> AW senior leadership to comply with AFI 11-206 was a cause of the CT-43 mishap. AFI 11-206, paragraph 8.4.1, requires that any “instrument approach procedures not published in a Department of Defense (DOD) or National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) flight information publication be reviewed by the major command Terminal Instrument Procedures specialist. This review must take place

before it can be flown by Air Force crews.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, AFI 11-206 specifically required the 86<sup>th</sup> AW major command to review and approve all non-DOD approach procedures prior to their being flown<sup>6</sup>. The 86<sup>th</sup> AW requested a waiver to AFI 11-206; however, the waiver was denied.<sup>7</sup>

Informal correspondence, i.e., e-mail, between HQ USAFE and the 86<sup>th</sup> AW operations group commander concerning a waiver to AFI 11-206 initially by-passed the 86<sup>th</sup> AW commander. Upon subsequently, learning of the waiver denial, the 86<sup>th</sup> AW commander immediately met with the 86<sup>th</sup> OG commander. Following this meeting with key staff, it was determined that flying the unauthorized approaches did not compromise safety. This was not the commander’s decision to make because higher headquarters had already specially been asked for a waiver to fly the approaches and it had been denied..<sup>8</sup> Thus, the 86<sup>th</sup> AW Commander exceeded his authority by authorizing his crews to fly a non-DOD approach at Dubrovnik, Croatia. To make matters worse, the crew made a series of critical mistakes when flying the approach.

The aircrew made four critical errors, all of which were determined to be contributory causes of the mishap. First, the aircrew improperly planned the mission which added 15 minutes to their flight time. As a direct result of this improper planning, they failed to realize that they did not have the proper equipment to land at Dubrovnik<sup>9</sup>. Second, the aircrew improperly planned the flight and was late arriving at Dubrovnik. As a result, they rushed the landing approach and failed to properly configure the aircraft.<sup>10</sup> Third, the aircrew failed to monitor their final approach due to a rush to land, radio distraction at Dubrovnik and an improperly configured aircraft. Fourth and most important, in the opinion of the accident board president, the aircrew “failed to identify their missed

approach point and execute a missed approach.” According to the investigation board president, “if the pilots had not been able to see the runway and descend for a landing, they should have executed a missed approach no later than the missed approach point.”<sup>11</sup>

Two lingering questions regarding accountability enforcement in the CT-43 mishap remain unanswered. One, although a field grade action officer from the 17<sup>th</sup> Air Force Standardization and Evaluation Division knew as early as 23 Jan 96 that the 86<sup>th</sup> AW was in violation of AFI 11-206, why was no action taken? Two, if the CT-43 accident was mostly caused by the “failure of command” to ensure compliance with a regulation (AFI 11-206), how does this situation differ from the F-15 incident in which the finding was that the maintainers negligently failed to comply with the requirement to properly inspect. Both cases resulted in a loss of life. However, only in the case of the F-15 crash was anyone charged with negligent homicide.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Department of the Air Force, CT-43A Accident Investigation Report, 73-1149, 3 April 1996, Dubrovnik, Croatia, Volume 1. 1 - 94.

<sup>2</sup> “CT-43 Accident Report Findings and Corrective Actions,” Air Force Letter Digest, June 1996, Microsoft Internet Explorer.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> “The Tragedy of Dubrovnik,” Flying Safety 53, no. 2, Air Force Recurring Publication 91-1 (February 1997); 18 - 20.

<sup>5</sup> Department of the Air Force, CT-43A Accident Investigation Report, 73-1149, 3 April 1996, Dubrovnik, Croatia, Volume 1. 1 - 94.

<sup>6</sup> “The Tragedy of Dubrovnik,” Flying Safety 53, no. 2, Air Force Recurring Publication 91-1 (February 1997): 18-20.

<sup>7</sup> Department of the Air Force, CT-43A Accident Investigation Report, 73-1149, 3 April 1996, Dubrovnik, Croatia, Volume 1. 1 - 94.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> “The Tragedy of Dubrovnik,” Flying Safety 53, no. 2, Air Force Recurring Publication 91-1 (February 1997): 18-20.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Conclusion**

Accountability, appears to be the leadership watch word of the future. Therefore, the manner in which senior Air Force leadership defines it, will shape how commanders, supervisors and individuals apply accountability standards in future cases.

Failure by senior Air Force leadership to adequately define, explain or uniformly apply accountability standards will continue to fuel the perception that accountability is an inconsistent, situation dependent and subjective concept. Such a perception reinforce the negative appearance of a “double standard” and a “one mistake” Air Force.

Air Force senior leadership must do two things to correct the negative appearance of a “double standard” and “one mistake” Air Force. First, be as aggressive as legal restriction allow in rebutting the incredible amount of incorrect and partial information about high profile incidents appearing in the *Air Force Times* and other non-DOD publications. Second, develop a standard Air Force definition of accountability, along with an accountability Air Force Instruction (AFI), that eliminates as much as possible, the subjectivity that will always be present when determining accountability.

Current problems associated with accountability parallel those previously experienced with the lack of a standard Air Force definition for fraternization and a fraternization AFI.

Prior to development of a standard definition of fraternization and an accompanying AFI, fraternization enforcement was inconsistent, situation dependent and subjective.

Every high profile incident examined is different. Yet, it is the responsibility of Air Force senior leadership to apply consistent standards. When one has access to all the facts, it is clear Air Force senior leadership is attempting to do so. Yet it is very difficult to get access to the facts. This, unfortunately, in each one of the incidents is true, most Air Force members rely on the *Air Force Times* or some other non-DOD publication for their source of information.

## **Recommendations**

Air Force senior leadership must develop a central data base Air Force members can tie into and get factual information about high profile incidents within the boundary of privacy. A good starting point for such an initiative would be SAF/PA. No Air Force member should have to make twenty different calls around the globe ( as I did for this paper ) just to track down information on one high profile incident.

- Air Force senior leadership must develop a standardized definition of accountability.

A proposed definition is:

Accountability means you are responsible for all your actions and the actions of the people you command which you could have reasonably influenced.

- Air Force senior leadership must develop an accountability AFI.
  - The AFI must address the chain of accountability, which is often overlooked.

In other words, ensure the entire chain of command is reviewed for breaches of

duty when accountability is an issue. For example, were only two NCOs accountable for the F-15C crash?

- The AFI must include a decision review process model. Application of this process model would alleviate the perception that the new emphasis on accountability has turned into an “O-6 witch-hunt,” or that some careers are sacrificed for the benefit of others.
- The AFI should provide accountability examples similar to the ones used for sexual harassment training.
- Perhaps these recommendations will help us reach the point when accountability serves its stated purpose:

Accountability is critically important to good order and discipline of the force. And, failure to ensure accountability will destroy the trust of the American public—the very people living under the Constitution we swore to support and defend, and who look to us, the members of their nation’s Air Force, to embrace and live by the standards that are higher than those in the society we serve<sup>1</sup>.

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Air Force Standards and Accountability, 10 August 1995. 1 - 8.

## Appendix A

### Accountability Survey Results

	SA	AG	UND	DA	SDA
<b>STATEMENT 1</b>					
<b>AWC</b>	06.73	19.23	10.57	48.07	15.38
<b>ACSC</b>	13.20	20.75	04.71	42.45	18.86
<b>SOS</b>	08.47	48.30	08.47	27.96	06.77
<b>STATEMENT 2</b>					
<b>AWC</b>	23.07	39.42	08.65	20.19	08.65
<b>ACSC</b>	20.75	38.67	02.83	28.30	09.43
<b>SOS</b>	23.72	49.15	05.93	19.49	05.93
<b>STATEMENT 3</b>					
<b>AWC</b>	58.65	32.69	02.88	05.76	00.00
<b>ACSC</b>	38.67	41.50	06.60	08.49	04.71
<b>SOS</b>	39.83	38.98	15.25	04.23	01.69
<b>STATEMENT 4</b>					
<b>AWC</b>	16.34	39.42	07.69	31.73	04.80
<b>ACSC</b>	16.03	33.96	10.37	37.73	01.88
<b>SOS</b>	13.55	19.49	25.42	37.28	04.23
<b>STATEMENT 5</b>					
<b>AWC</b>	25.00	24.03	08.65	26.92	15.38
<b>ACSC</b>	26.41	19.81	10.37	28.30	15.09
<b>SOS</b>	19.49	25.42	17.79	29.66	07.62
<b>STATEMENT 6</b>					
<b>AWC</b>	24.03	30.76	10.57	27.88	06.73
<b>ACSC</b>	22.64	38.67	10.37	20.75	07.54
<b>SOS</b>	17.79	33.05	19.49	25.42	04.23



***PEOPLE SURVEYED: 441***

***AWC:*** 171

***ACSC:*** 130

***SOS:*** 140

***SURVEYS RETURNED: 328***

***AWC:*** 104/60.81%

***ACSC:*** 106/81.53%

***SOS:*** 118/84.24%

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